Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A semiconductor device formed on a semiconductor chip, comprising:

a circuit area including an electronic circuit disposed on a surface of the semiconductor chip;

a metal guard ring disposed on said surface of the semiconductor chip, surrounding the circuit area, the metal guard ring having an inside edge, an outside edge, and a slit disposed between the inside edge and the outside edge; and

a passivation layer covering said surface of the semiconductor chip, the passivation layer having a slot disposed above the metal guard ring, the slot extending down to the metal guard ring and surrounding the circuit area, the slot being located away from the slit, so that the slit is covered by the passivation layer.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The semiconductor device of claim 1, wherein ~~the metal guard ring has an inside edge and an outside edge~~[[,]] the slot is narrower than the metal guard ring, and the inside edge and the outside edge of the metal guard ring are covered by the passivation layer.

Claim 3 (currently amended): The semiconductor device of claim 2, wherein:

the semiconductor chip has a corner; and

the ~~metal guard ring has a~~ slit in the metal guard ring is disposed ~~between said inside edge and said outside edge~~ at least at said corner[[;]] ~~and the slot in the passivation layer avoids said slit, leaving said slit covered by the passivation layer~~.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The semiconductor device of claim 2 [[3]], wherein the slot in the passivation layer is disposed between [[said]] the slit and the outside edge of the metal guard ring.

Claim 5 (currently amended): A method of manufacturing a semiconductor device, comprising:

forming an electronic circuit [[with]] on a surface of a semiconductor chip, and forming a metal guard ring surrounding the electronic circuit on said surface of the semiconductor chip, the metal guard ring having an inside edge, an outside edge, and a slit disposed between the inside edge and the outside edge;

covering said surface of the semiconductor chip, including the electronic circuit and the metal guard ring, with a passivation layer; and

forming a slot in the passivation layer above the metal guard ring, the slot extending down to the metal guard ring and surrounding the electronic circuit, the slot being located away from the slit, so that the slit is covered by the passivation layer.

Claim 6 (original): The method of claim 5, wherein:

the forming of said electronic circuit includes forming a metal pad within the electronic circuit; and

the forming of said slot includes simultaneously forming an opening in the

passivation layer above the metal pad, for connection of a bonding wire to the metal pad.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The method of claim 5, wherein ~~the metal guard ring has an inside edge and an outside edge~~[[,]] the slot is narrower than the metal guard ring, and the inside edge and the outside edge of the metal guard ring are covered by the passivation layer.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The method of claim 7, wherein:

the semiconductor chip has a corner; and

the ~~metal guard ring has a~~ slit in the metal guard ring is disposed ~~between said inside edge and said outside edge~~ at least at said corner[[;]] ~~and the slot in the passivation layer avoids said slit, leaving said slit covered by the passivation layer~~.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The method of claim 7 [[8]], wherein the slot in the passivation layer is disposed between [[said]] the slit and the outside edge of the metal guard ring.